

1987

PATHFINDER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
Wyoming

Administered by Arapaho NWR
PO Box 457, Walden, Colorado

Introduction

Pathfinder National Wildlife Refuge is an overlay on part of the Bureau of Reclamation's Pathfinder Reservoir in south-central Wyoming. This isolated refuge is 50 miles southwest of Casper and 20 miles from the small settlement of Alcova, Wyoming. Refuge headquarters for Pathfinder Refuge is at Arapaho NWR, about 200 miles to the south.

The refuge was established on August 1, 1936, as an overlay on the entire reservoir, but it was reduced to its present four small units containing 16,807 acres, to facilitate more intensive management by Public Land Order in 1965. The largest unit of the refuge lies astraddle of what is known as the Sweetwater Arm of the reservoir. The three smaller units are to the south of the large one at Goose Bay, DeWeese Creek and at the junction of Sage Creek and the North Platte River.

Pathfinder Refuge is an established feeding, resting and nesting ground for both ducks and Canada geese, providing for as many as 8,500 ducks and 500 geese on their annual migrations.

In addition to migratory birds, the refuge provides habitat for hundreds of pronghorn, cottontail rabbits, a few mule deer and sage grouse. It is typical of much of the semi-desert lands of Wyoming, except that the reservoir furnishes more water. Since the reservoir fluctuates as much as 50 feet per year, it is difficult to provide food and cover for waterfowl near the water line.

1987 Activities

Pathfinder was visited only once in 1987. In October, Varney drove up to the Sweetwater Arm of the reservoir to look at a proposed power line corridor through part of the refuge. The corridor through the refuge is an alternate route of a proposed line from Spence to the Jim Bridger Power Plant near Rock Springs. Our recommendations, made through the ES Office in Cheyenne, were that we would prefer that the line not cross the refuge if an alternative was feasible. We did state, however, that we would not prohibit the line from being built; that if no other

solution was found, an easement for a properly placed and designed power line could be arranged.

While there, Varney checked a couple goose nesting structures on Steamboat Lake and found one to contain evidence of successful nesting. He counted 200 antelope and 60 Canada geese grazing on the exposed river plain where the Sweetwater River enters the reservoir.

A check for \$40.00 was presented to Carbon County as in-lieu of taxes payment for 1986.